



Antelope Valley Air Quality Management District
43301 Division Street, Suite 206
Lancaster, CA 93535
(661) 723-8070

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For further information contact:

Violette Roberts, Antelope Valley APCD (760) 245-1661, ext. 6104

Rich Campbell, USDA/NRCS (661) 945-2604

DUSTBUSTERS ANNOUNCE LATEST MILESTONES IN DUST CONTROL STUDY

Lancaster – Since the early 1990's, wind and abandoned desert farms have provided fertile breeding ground for "dust bowl" conditions in the Mojave Desert, but ongoing research by the Antelope Valley Dustbusters is unearthing new ways of keeping the dust "down on the farm."

The latest findings of the research project - launched in 1991 for the purpose of finding solutions to fugitive dust blowing from disturbed and abandoned agricultural fields in the Antelope Valley - were announced today during a press conference and informational meeting in Lancaster, sponsored by the Antelope Valley Dustbusters. The Dustbusters task force is a multi-agency fugitive dust research team comprised of representatives from the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (USDA/NRCS), the University of California/Riverside (UCR), Southern California Edison (SCE), the Antelope Valley Air Pollution Control District (AVAPCD), Desert Research Institute, the University of California/San Diego, the South Coast Air Quality Management District, the L.A. World's Airport and the Antelope Valley Resource Conservation District.

Now in its third phase, the research project's current focus is on using irrigation and plant shelters to revegetate and stabilize disturbed soil surfaces; applying soil suppressant chemicals to barren fields to halt soil erosion, and erecting wind fences to curb the movement of windblown dust and sand. During today's conference, representatives from several stakeholder organizations – including Rob Farber of SCE and Dave Grantz of UCR – presented progress reports on the Dustbusters' success in utilizing these innovative mechanisms as solutions to airborne dust, which not only reduces visibility, but can also aggravate asthma and other respiratory conditions in sensitive individuals.

"As a result of the Dustbusters' efforts, Antelope Valley residents will be breathing even cleaner, healthier air in the near future," said Bret Banks, Operations Manager for the AVAPCD, which recently presented its annual award for Achievement In Reducing Emissions (AIRE) to Dustbusters co-founder Rich Campbell, Conservationist for the USDA/NRCS, for his extensive work as the Antelope Valley's "unofficial dust control ambassador."

Research in the project's first two phases focused on using both seeds and seedling plants to revegetate barren fields, and installing wind fences in sandy areas not conducive to revegetation. The current – and final - phase of the dust control research project is expected to extend through 2003.